

Viets not in RP part of Spratlys, says NSC chief

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National Security Adviser Roilo Golez yesterday denied a Vietnamese takeover of a rock formation in the Philippine part of the Spratlys. What the Vietnamese occupied, he said, is Pugad Island — and that occupation is now 20 years old.

“The Wescom denied the veracity of news reports regarding reoccupation of Vietnamese forces of Parola Island,” Golez said. The Manila Times ran a story on that report, quoting Foreign Affairs sources. The Times noted that Armed Forces officials had denied the report.

Golez said everything at the Parola Island is business as usual as far as the military is concerned.

He did admit, however, that there had been “sightings” of Vietnamese and even Chinese nationals in the area, but insisted these were only fishermen. “There was nothing unusual in Parola Island except for sightings of Vietnamese and Chinese fishing vessels regularly fishing in the area approximately 800 yards to five nautical miles from Parola,” Golez said.

The Times report quoted the military insisting the visitors were fishermen but cited recent similar events that mushroomed into more serious matters.

Golez said the military leadership is ready to fly members of media in the area for a reconnaissance flight.

Parola Island belongs to the disputed Spratley’s group of islands where at least five countries, the Philippines, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam, are claiming territorial jurisdiction over it. The area is a known mineral rich region, where deposits of crude oil had been reported.